

Message Text

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43

ACTION SS-25

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O R 031225Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6709

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 11885

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG PFOR EG IS US XE

SUBJ: MARINER TO RETURN TO SITE 304.1

REF: A) STATE 218367, B)STATE 218121, C) CAIRO 11867

1. ROSS CRAIG, AMOCO EGYPT MANAGER, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR SEPTEMBER 3 TO SAY THAT AMOCO HAS DECIDED MOVE MARINER RIG BACK TO SITE 304.1. DEPARTURE FROM CURRENT LOCATION IN JULY FIELD WILL PROBABLY TAKE PLACE MORNING SEPTEMBER 4, WEATHER PERMITTING. RIG SHOULD BE AT SITE 304.1 FEW HOURS LATER. (FOR DEPARTMENT'S INFORMATION FOLLOWING ARE LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES FOR SITE 304.1 -- 28 DEGREES, 16 MINUTES, 59.8 SECONDS NORTH; 33 DEGREES, 20 MINUTES, 40.1 SECONDS EAST, PLUS OR MINUS 400 FEET.)

2. AMOCO HOME OFFICE INFORMED CRAIG SEPTEMBER 2 THAT, BASED ON CONTACTS WITH STATE, IT THEIR OPINION THAT ISRAELIS WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH MARINER IF IT NOW RETURNS TO SITE. CRAIG SHARES THIS OPINION (SEE BELOW). AMOCO FEELS STONGLY THAT RIG MUST RETURN TO SITE IN ORDER THAT (A) THAT AMOCO NOT LOSE LEASE ON AREA, WHICH EXPIRES SEPTEMBER 21 UNLESS WELL IS DRILLED AND (B) IT NOT SET PRECEDENT REGARDING ACTIVITY EAST OF ISRAELIS SO CALLED MEDIAN LINE. PLANS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF RAMADAN FIELD CALL FOR PRODUCTION PLATFORMS TO BE PLACED CLOSE TO 304.1 LOCATION; ALL FUTURE SITES ARE EAST OF MEDIAN LINE. ACTIVITY IN THIS AREA
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THEREFORE IS CRUCIAL TO OVERALL PLANS FOR AMOCO'S FUTURE

DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND TO EGYPTIAN ECONOMY.

3. CRAIG THEN DESCRIBED IMPORTANT CONDITION HE HAD POSED TO HILAL FOR RETURN OF RIG; I.E. THAT THERE BE NO EGYPTIAN NAVAL ESCORT, THAT ALL EXTRA HELICOPTERS , PLANES AND ESPECIALLY WAR SHIPS LEAVE THE AREA. HILAL, ACCORDING CRAIG, CONTACTED GAMASSY WHO AGREED. CRAIG SAID THAT HE WILL NOT ALLOW MARINER TO DEPART UNTIL HE HAS WORD THAT TWO WARSHIPS, CURRENTLY IN RAS SHUKAIR, HAVE DEPARTED SOUTHWARD. CRAIG EMPHASIZED THIS IS STRICTLY CIVILIAN OPERATION AND HE WANTS NO OPPORTUNITY FOR IT TO TURN INTO SHOOTING MATCH. CREW, ACCORDING CRAIG, UNDERSTANDS WHAT THEY ARE GETTING INTO. AMOCO WILL ALSO TRY TO ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE BETTER COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN RIG, RAS SHUKAIR, AND CAIRO, THAT WAS THE CASE DURING AUGUST 31 INCIDENT.

4. CRAIG EXPECTS THAT THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER TROUBLE WITH ISRAELIS. THIS IS BASED UPON PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WHEN ISRAELIS DID NOT INTERCEPT SECOND ATTEMPTS BY AMOCO TO CARRY OUT ACTIVITY EAST OF MEDIAN LINE.

5. CRAIG PROMISED INFORM US WHEN RIG DEPARTS CURRENT LOCATION.

6. AMBASSADOR SUBSEQUENTLY TELEPHONED GAMASSY, WHO CONFIRMED HE HAD AGREED NO NAVAL ESCORT WOULD BE SENT. INSTEAD, TWO EGYPTIAN GUNBOATS WOULD BE POSITIONED SOUTH OF RAS SHUKAIR ABOUT TEN MILES FROM 304.1 SITE. THEY WOULD MOVE IN ONLY IF ISRAELIS AGAIN SEEK TO INTERFERE WITH OPERATION. GAMASSY INDICATED HE AGREED TO HILAL/AMOCO REQUEST, SINCE HE, TOO, WANTS TO AVOID, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, AN ARMED CLASH. HOWEVER, GOE WILL BE PREPARED PROTECT ITS INTERESTS IF NECESSARY.
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